

CIAA

from page B1

The vast majority of people who come to the tournament, Williams explained, do so for reasons other than watching basketball. He estimates that 75 percent of those CIAA visitors will not attend a game because they know little or nothing about the players or the teams.

"You're far more likely to have a packed house at one of the non-basketball venues," he said. "Over the years, the CIAA Tournament has evolved. From a basketball standpoint, it has lost some of its luster. On the other hand, it's gained considerable luster as a social event. Go on the tournament website and you're inundated with info about all the extra-curricular events. When it comes to finding info about basketball, it's not so easy."



Gaither

The CIAA has taken steps to establish a long-term relationship with Charlotte, which has hosted the tournament since 2006. A new contract has been signed that will keep the tournament in the Queen City for another six years. Aside from that, the Hampton, Va.-based conference will move its headquarters to Charlotte in 2016. These developments should bode well for the tournament's future.

Still, there are challenges. Building a large enough fan base to fill most of the 20,200 seats in Time Warner Cable Arena (home of the Charlotte Hornets) is no easy task.

"As a Division II conference playing in an NBA arena,



Photo by Craig T. Greenlee

WSSU's Shaquira Palmer (red band) gets ready to shoot. The Lady Rams played Tuesday in the tournament's opening round against Chowan.

you have to do other things to generate income," said Steven J. Gaither, creator of the HBCU GameDay website. "Building attendance is an on-going process. The CIAA is headed in the right direction. It's a matter of finding the right balance between basketball and entertainment. With the headquarters moving to Charlotte, it gives the conference more opportunities to cultivate year-round support from all segments of the community."

Basketball-wise, the men's and women's tournaments could be wide open. On the men's side, the top four teams in the North and South divisions finished the season tied for first and third place.

As for the women, the North Division's top four finishers were separated by one game. In the South, all eyes will be on Livingstone's Lady Blue Bears, who were

undefeated for most of the season, but ended up forfeiting 18 games because their best player, Kyra Crosby, was ruled ineligible.

Livingstone, which would have been a No. 1 seed, was dropped to No. 3 after the forfeits were factored in. Even though Crosby is out, the Lady Blue Bears are still capable of winning the CIAA and advancing to Division II's national tournament. But that doesn't make Livingstone a lock to bag the title.

Top-seed Shaw could pose problems. The Lady Bears only league losses came at the hands of Livingstone. Johnson C. Smith shouldn't be overlooked either. It was the Lady Golden Bulls who handed Livingstone its only on-the-court loss of the season.

"Looking at how the regular season turned out, there's an air of unpredictability in Charlotte for this week," said Eric Moore, managing editor of the Onnidan.com website. "Being the No. 1 seed doesn't guarantee anything. Sometimes, top-seeded teams are rusty in the first round. They've had time off with a first-round bye and could be prone for an upset as a result."

Another factor to consider is the arena itself. CIAA teams don't play in large venues like the one in Charlotte. When playing in big arenas, depth perception can be an issue, especially for 3-point shooting. The teams that make the right adjustments from one half to the next and from one game to the next will be the teams that win."



Moore

JV

from page B1

their credit, they played hard and never gave up. With every game and with every practice, they took a step forward and continued to show improvement."

3-A North Forsyth

North Forsyth proved to be one of the JV elites this season. The Vikings (15-6) ended up sharing the Mid-Piedmont Conference regular season title with Asheboro. During the season, both teams split in their two games and posted identical 11-1 records in conference play.

"Our season was efficient and productive," said Coach Jefferey Moore. "The players learned how to execute in game situations and that made a huge difference. They did a good job of changing over from having a 'me' mentality to having a team mentality."

Over the course of the season, three JV players were promoted to varsity. Deante Petree moved up after the first two weeks of the season. David Payne joined Petree in early February and Cameron King was called up, at the end of the JV season.

Caleb Pettigrew, an agile 6-foot-2-inches, 290 pounds post player, developed as a formidable factor in the paint. His emergence didn't happen right away. It took Pettigrew, a JV football fullback, several weeks to get fully acclimated to basketball.

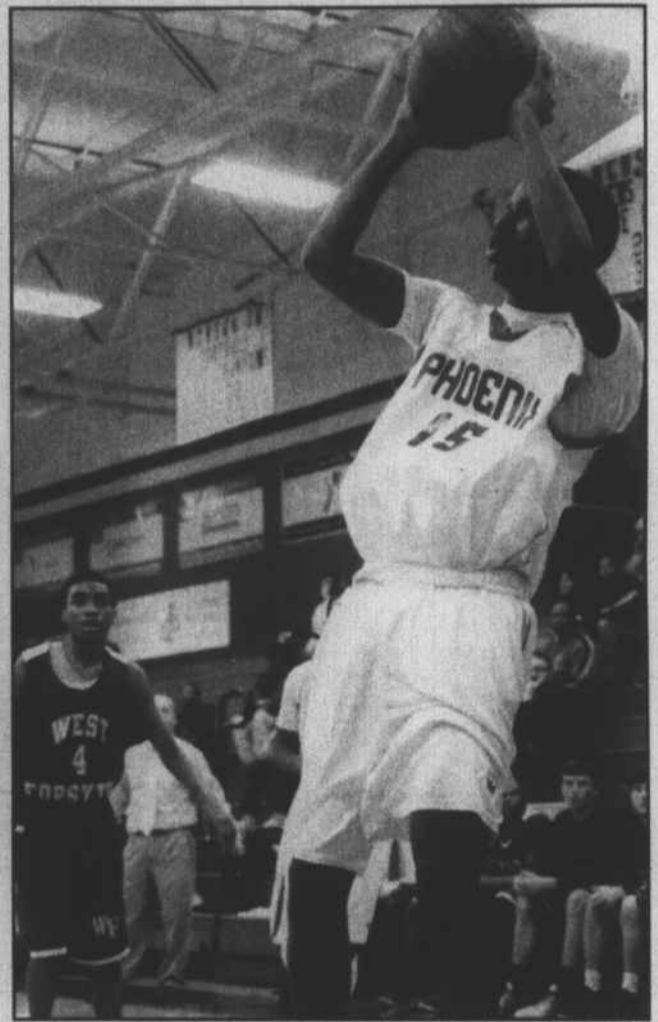
"Once Caleb got in basketball shape, his confidence grew and he became a big playmaker," said Moore. "Coming down the stretch, he played his best ball of the season."

Next week: JV season wrap-up for Class 4-A schools.



Photos by Charles E. Leftwich

Camels guard D.J. Williams (2) elevated his level of play over the final weeks of the season.



Caleb Burgess was the top scorer for the Phoenix at 14 points per game.

Turner

from page B1

"The ultimate goal is to keep everybody healthy and gear the training so that they peak at the right time," said Turner. "We put a lot of emphasis on the mental approach. They've come to understand that they've done the necessary work to be at their best. So, when it's time to compete, it's all about trusting in themselves and trusting that the training will put them in the best position to be successful."

While winning the CIAA is noteworthy, it's not a climax. The winter season isn't over. The Lady Rams travel to Virginia for the Mason Last Chance Meet on Sunday. It's their final regular-season competition prior to the NCAA Division II Indoor National Championships scheduled for mid-March in Birmingham, Ala. The Mason gives WSSU's provisional qualifiers one final opportunity

to bolster their chances to make the cut for nationals.

Winston-Salem State will send at least two athletes to Alabama. CIAA triple jump champ Tajanel McNeill won with a leap of 40-feet, 11 3/4 inches to guarantee her spot as an automatic qualifier (No. 5 nationally).

Raven Covington is .05 seconds shy of automatic qualifying in the 60-meter dash. Covington, though, won the conference title with a time of 7.47 seconds, which is the second-fastest time in Division II. Ada Nudaya of New Haven (7.33 seconds) is the only runner who has met the auto qualifying standard for that event. Given Covington's lofty ranking among provisional qualifiers (tied for No. 1), she'll be in the championship field for the 60.

Turner understands what it takes to compete at the highest levels. The former world-class middle-distance runner from Jamaica ran in the 1996 Olympics (800, 4x400 relay), brought home the gold (800) at the 1994 Commonwealth Games, then won a bronze medal for Jamaica in the 4x400 relay at the 1997 World Championships.

As a collegian at Texas State in the mid-1990s, Turner was a two-time NCAA outdoor champ in the 800. Prior to that, she won back-to-back NJCAA outdoor titles in the 800 at Barton Community College.

The philosophy that Turner preaches to her athletes is to let performance speak for itself. It's a mantra that she continuously reinforces.

"I make a habit to remind them that they've done the work," she said. "Based on their own performances, they know they can compete against anybody. There's no reason to fear anyone. Just stay focused, and the good things will come."

Covington, a junior who has been hampered by hamstring injuries during her first two seasons, fully embraces Turner's methods. The training and mindset adjustment, she explained, has laid the foundation for her to experience her best college season so far.

"The workouts aren't hard if your mind is straight," said Covington. "You learn to push past discomfort. The pain is only temporary. When you succeed, you don't forget about the pain you went through. What matters most is having the willingness to do what needs to be done. That's what enables you to accomplish whatever it is that you desire."



Ty-Leah Hampton of WSSU is a provisional qualifier for the indoor nationals in the 60-meter dash and 4x400 relay.



Photos by Craig T. Greenlee

WSSU sprinter Raven Covington